

**APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR SHARING A NETWORK I/O ADAPTER  
BETWEEN LOGICAL PARTITIONS**

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

An I/O adapter sharing mechanism in a logically partitioned computer system  
5 allows sharing a network I/O adapter between logical partitions in an efficient manner. A  
first logical partition owns (or controls) the I/O adapter, and a second logical partition  
desires to use (or share) the I/O adapter. An I/O adapter device driver that includes a  
hardware interface is provided in the first logical partition. A virtual device driver is  
provided in the second logical partition that provides a set of functions that is at least  
10 partially defined by querying the I/O adapter device driver in the first logical partition.  
The I/O adapter sharing mechanism includes a transfer mechanism that allows data to be  
transferred directly from the virtual device driver in the second logical partition to the I/O  
adapter without passing through the I/O adapter device driver in the first logical partition.